

BOUNDARY EVALUATION ACTION PLAN

Overview

The issue of expanding the Sanctuary's boundary was raised by many people during a series of seven management plan public scoping meetings held in 1999, and has remained an issue of continued interest to numerous constituents.³² This action plan describes the continued study of and decision-making process for a possible change to the Sanctuary's boundary. Analysis of the Sanctuary boundary has been ongoing since early in the management plan revision process and resulted in a range of preliminary boundary concepts (see Vol. I, Appendix D). Work will continue until sufficient data and analysis have been completed, at which point a supplemental environmental review process will be initiated that will ultimately lead to a decision about changing the Sanctuary's boundaries.

Description of the Issues

Three main factors have driven the NMSP's interest in considering whether to propose a change to the CINMS boundary: 1) an emerging understanding of how the Sanctuary's living resources are integrally connected to marine areas outside the CINMS boundary, 2) heightened awareness of human activities occurring outside the Sanctuary which could pose threats to CINMS resources, and 3) high public interest in boundary expansion as expressed clearly during the 1999 public scoping meetings. Since 1999, these factors were considered as the management plan review process evolved. Process history and findings to date are summarized below, with additional details provided in Vol. I, Appendix D.

Scoping Comments

Applying an ecosystem approach to Sanctuary management was one of the most prevalent issues identified during the 1999 public scoping process and subsequent meetings with the Sanctuary Advisory Council. Some of the specific ecosystem-based management comments and ideas that emerged were:

- The Sanctuary should apply an ecosystem approach, adaptive management and other marine management tools to the framework for the management plan;
- CINMS must consider the interconnections of habitats and ecosystems when proposing management actions;
- Sanctuary resource management should be based on a thorough understanding of ecosystem management as an alternative to specific species management and
- The management plan should address terrestrial impacts on the Sanctuary (such as the relationship between human activities in the island watersheds and their effect on intertidal habitats).

Some of the most frequent comments heard during the public scoping period were that the Sanctuary boundary should be expanded to incorporate more of the regional marine ecosystem. Doing so, it was argued, would help CINMS better address management issues associated with coastal watersheds, oil and gas development, water quality, and military activity. It would also provide more opportunities for the Sanctuary to improve overall marine resource protection. CINMS received hundreds of comments

³² CINMS consists of an area of approximately 1110 square nautical miles (nmi) off the southern coast of California. The Sanctuary boundary begins at the Mean High Water Line of and extends seaward to a distance of approximately six nmi from the following islands and offshore rocks: San Miguel Island, Santa Cruz Island, Santa Rosa Island, Anacapa Island, Santa Barbara Island, Richardson Rock, and Castle Rock (the Islands).

(including three petitions with over 1500 signatures) in support of expanding the Sanctuary.³³ CINMS also received less than a hundred comments that expressed opposition to the idea of expanding the Sanctuary boundary. Some of the specific boundary-related comments included:

- CINMS should expand its boundary to include the entire Santa Barbara Channel and Santa Catalina Island;
- CINMS should expand its boundary north to San Luis Obispo and the Santa Lucia Bank to better incorporate regional resources and dynamic attributes (upwelling areas, spawning grounds for certain fish species, etc.);
- CINMS should expand its boundary north to meet the southern edge of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary;
- CINMS should expand its boundary north to Santa Rosa Creek to better protect biodiversity;
- CINMS should evaluate the advantages for the ecosystem by expanding its boundary;
- CINMS should not expand its boundary and
- To better protect biodiversity, CINMS should redraw its boundary to include the Nipomo Dunes and Point Sal.

Determining a Study Area

Immediately following the public scoping meetings, CINMS staff began compiling updated information about the Sanctuary, including its natural and historical resources, trends in human use and activities, and potential threats to Sanctuary resources and qualities within and adjacent to the CINMS. This was done in response to comments and concerns raised during the public scoping meetings and to gain a better understanding of the larger marine ecosystem and human environment within and surrounding the Sanctuary. Defining a geographical “study area” within which to collect data was the first step in this process. Determining a study area was also required to begin work on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) so environmental and socioeconomic impacts from any proposed changes to CINMS management could be assessed within and adjacent to the Sanctuary.

In 2000, CINMS contracted Dr. Michael McGinnis to provide recommendations on the location of an appropriate study area. This work was contracted specifically to provide information to the Sanctuary useful for determining a management plan study area. The McGinnis (2002) study, called “A Recommended Study Area for the CINMS Management Planning Process: Ecological Linkages in the Marine Ecology from Point Sal to Point Mugu,” evaluated the state of knowledge on oceanographic conditions and processes (*e.g.*, water temperatures, currents and upwelling patterns), the range and distribution of marine species found near the Channel Islands, and the status of marine and coastal habitats within the Sanctuary region. It also evaluated such factors as the extent of interconnectedness between species found within the Sanctuary, their needs for outlying habitats and food sources, and the interplay of oceanographic processes. Of particular importance was the finding that the spatial extent of the Sanctuary’s two bioregions (cold temperate, warm temperate) and the transition zone between them fluctuates more northward than previously known. As such, McGinnis recommended a study area extending from the current Sanctuary boundary to the mainland coast, northward to Point Sal, and southward to Point Mugu. CINMS staff discussed McGinnis’ recommendations with the Sanctuary Advisory Council and Sanctuary stakeholders, and determined the final management plan study area (Figure 41), which extends approximately from Point Sal to Point Dume.

³³ The majority of these comments encouraged CINMS to expand the Sanctuary boundary to the mainland coast.

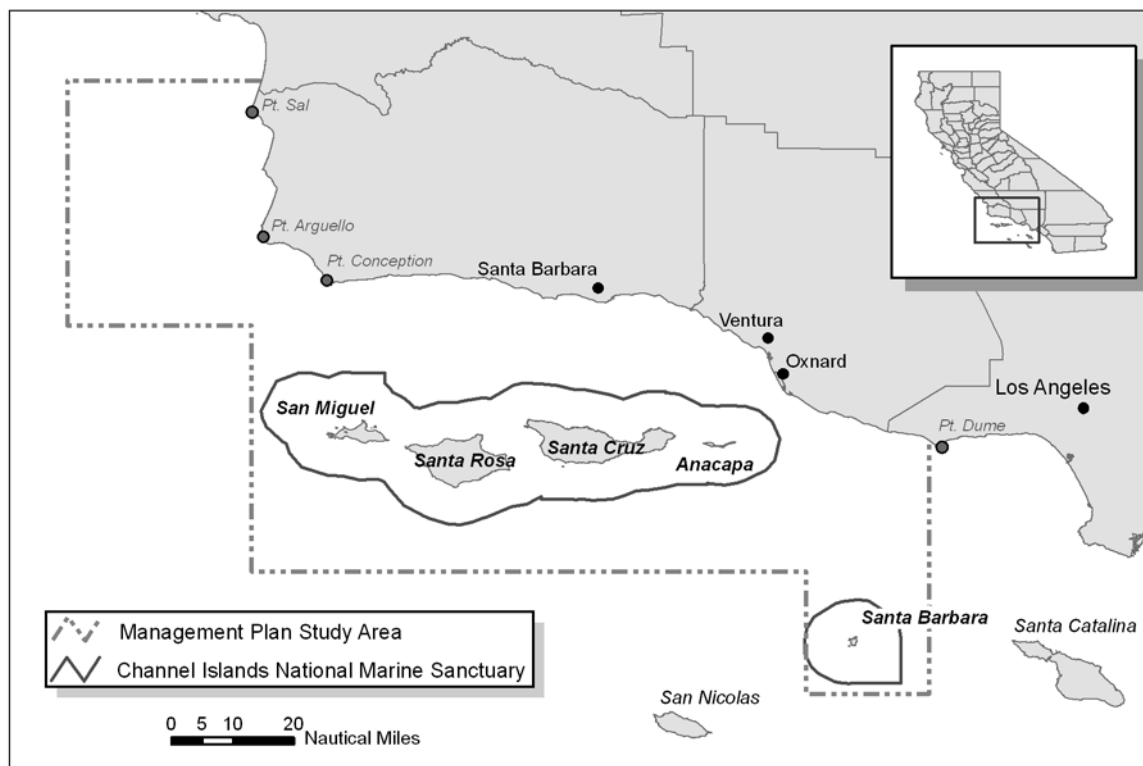


Figure 41. CINMS Management Plan Review Study Area

The study area contains a diverse array of natural resources, ecological qualities and historical/cultural resources (detailed information about all of these features is found in the FEIS (Vol. II, Section 3.0). Several activities and human-influenced processes occur within the study area as well, including but not limited to:

- Military activities such as training exercises, military testing and evaluation projects for aircraft, ship and missile programs, commercial and military space launches;
- Inputs to coastal marine waters from nonpoint source pollutants (such as coastal watershed runoff) and point-source pollution discharges (including municipal treatment facilities and power plants);
- Offshore oil and gas activities such as exploratory seismic surveys, effluents from oil and gas production, potential spills from pipelines, platforms, and tankers, and the possible decommissioning and potential removal (or not) of platforms;
- Commercial fishing;³⁴
- Recreational fishing;³⁵
- Motorized personal watercraft use; and
- Port and harbor operations.

³⁴ To obtain some of this information, CINMS often referred to an ethnographic data survey of long-time mariners familiar with Sanctuary waters (Airame and Simon 2000). This survey characterizes the value of knowledge many of these individuals have about the Sanctuary ecosystems. See the Human Activities action plan for descriptions of these activities and management actions CINMS is proposing to address them.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Considering Preliminary Boundary Concepts

With a better understanding of ecosystem connectivity and human use patterns within the study area, Sanctuary staff and the Advisory Council then began to discuss possible alternatives to the existing Sanctuary boundary. These public discussions with the Advisory Council led to the development a wide range of preliminary Sanctuary boundary concepts within the study area to be further analyzed. These boundary concepts initially included a status quo (no change) boundary configuration along with six expanded boundary configurations. Sanctuary staff then worked with NMSP headquarters staff to refine these preliminary boundary concepts, which resulted in a suite of alternatives including the status quo configuration plus five boundary concepts. These concepts are described in Vol. I, Appendix D.

In discussing the possibility of expanding the Sanctuary's boundary, and in comparing the various preliminary boundary concepts, several criteria were considered. Table 6 lists some of the main criteria analyzed by staff and reviewed at meetings and special workshops of the Advisory Council.

Table 6. Criteria Used in the Consideration of CINMS Boundary Alternatives

Category	Criteria
Ecosystem/ Biogeographic	Contains nationally significant living resources; vital habitats, resources needing protection from human activities, and a definable ecosystem unit.
	Contributes to maintaining, restoring or enhancing living resources, biological diversity, ecosystem structure, and maintenance of ecologically and commercially important species, threatened species or assemblages.
	Contributes to the biogeographic representation of the site.
Social/Cultural	Contains nationally significant non-living or human use resources, nationally significant cultural, archaeological, historical or paleo-ecological resources, areas significant to research, education, and recreation or of aesthetic value.
	Contains resources generating tourism, areas in which human activities are conducted that may need to be managed to protect resources, areas necessary to maintain access to larger areas.
	Future trends in uses depending on or impacting resources
	Impacts to socio-economic uses that may result from Sanctuary designation
Administrative	Provides opportunity for ecosystem-based management.
	Provides opportunity for integrated coastal watershed management.
	Supports, promotes, and coordinates scientific research.
	Cooperates with global programs.
	Contributes to comprehensive and coordinated conservation management.
	Facilitates public and private uses compatible with resource protection.
	The area is suitable for monitoring and enforcement.

Sanctuary Advisory Council Recommendation

In August 2000, after months of deliberation, the Advisory Council delivered a split recommendation to the Sanctuary Manager (now referred to as Sanctuary Superintendent) regarding a preferred boundary concept. One suggested boundary concept extended to the rural Gaviota coast, while avoiding the urban coast (including ports and harbors); the other recommended CINMS consider a relatively unchanged boundary alternative, featuring a "squaring off" of current boundaries and slight expansion to encompass a defunct chemical munitions dumpsite south of Santa Cruz Island.



Figure 42. Anacapa Island (Glenn Allen)

*NOAA Decision to Continue
Boundary Analysis*

Following the Advisory Council recommendation, NMSP headquarters staff revisited the boundary issue, analyzing criteria (Table 6) and considering input received from the public, stakeholder groups and various agencies. In the summer of 2002, the NMSP concluded conducting additional scientific data collection and analysis was desirable in order to make a more informed decision on boundary expansion. In particular, it was determined a detailed study of the Channel

Islands regional biogeography was needed and would be conducted by NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS). It was also determined, because the biogeography assessment was ongoing during development of the Draft Management Plan, no changes to the boundary would be proposed as part of this management plan revision; however, public comment on the preliminary boundary concepts (see Vol. I, Appendix D) is welcomed. NCCOS completed the biogeography assessment in 2005. After conclusion of the management plan revision process, the NMSP will conduct a supplemental environmental review process to consider boundary change options (as well as the status quo boundary), consider additional public comment and Advisory Council input, and identify a preferred boundary alternative. The NMSP will incorporate results of the NCCOS biogeography assessment into the supplemental environmental review process.

The remaining environmental review steps are described in the strategies of this action plan.

Addressing the Issues – Strategy For This Action Plan

The issue of determining the appropriate location of the Sanctuary's boundary is one that has undergone intense scrutiny and study since 1999. The strategy in this action plan presents a straight-forward plan for reaching a conclusion on this issue. The strategy herein outlines the subsequent supplemental environmental review and analysis that will lead to a final determination on the Sanctuary boundary (Strategy BE.1).

It is important to restate that this management plan does not propose any Sanctuary boundary changes at this time, but rather calls for the continuation of a comprehensive, scientifically-based, open public process that will lead to a sound decision in the future. Preliminary boundary concepts previously developed with community input are provided in Vol. I, Appendix D. Additional opportunities for public comment will be provided during the supplemental environmental review. Following the strategy below, Table 7 presents estimated costs for the Boundary Evaluation Action Plan.

STRATEGY BE.1 – FINAL DETERMINATION ON BOUNDARY ISSUE

- **Objective:** To conduct a scientifically rigorous, open public process to consider, analyze and make a final determination on changing the boundary of the Sanctuary.
- **Implementation:** Research and Monitoring, Education and Outreach, Resource Protection, Technology Integration and Management, and Community and Management Planning staff

Background

This strategy presents steps in an environmental review and decision-making process leading to a final decision on changing of the Sanctuary boundary. The environmental review process will build on significant work done to date, including the NCCOS biogeography assessment. In addition, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts associated with any boundary change alternative will be analyzed, documented in a supplemental environmental impact statement, and made available for public review and comment. The process will be open and transparent to the public, involving significant discussion with and input from the Advisory Council and other interested agencies and parties.

Activities (2)

(1) Prepare and Release Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/ Supplemental Management Plan. This activity encompasses a number of process steps to be taken in sequence, including: a) assimilation of biogeography assessment findings into a framework for fully analyzing boundary change options; b) development of a draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) and draft Supplemental Management Plan (SMP) to support consideration and analysis of various boundary change alternatives, and c) release of the draft SEIS/SMP to solicit and consider public and agency comments and suggestions. The Sanctuary Advisory Council will be an important body to offer review comments, feedback, and recommendations on boundary alternatives proposed within the SEIS/SMP.

Status: To be initiated after completion of final management plan

Partners: Multiple agencies, Sanctuary Advisory Council

(2) Issue Final SEIS/SMP; Make Final Decision on Boundary. This activity also encompasses a number of process steps leading to a final decision on the Sanctuary boundary. These steps include: a) responding to all comments received on the draft SEIS/SMP, b) developing a final SEIS/SMP; issuance of additional Sanctuary regulations, if necessary.

Status: To be initiated after completion of the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

Partners: Internal

Table 7. Estimated Costs for the Boundary Evaluation Action Plan

Strategy	Estimated Annual Cost (in thousands)*					Total Estimated 5 Year Cost
	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5	
BE.1: Final Determination on Boundary	\$0	\$125	\$125	\$0	\$0	\$250
Total Estimated Annual Cost	\$0**	\$125	\$125	-	-	\$250

* Cost estimates exclude base budget funding requirements (salaries, overhead, etc.).

** Includes funds expected from the NMSP.

Addressing the Issues – Strategies From Other Action Plans

While this action plan is in some ways unique among those found in this management plan, there are some strategies that may serve to better inform the analysis and decision-making processes needed to reach a sound decision on the boundary change issue. Related strategies include:

- RP.1 – Identifying & Assessing Current and Emerging Issues;
- CS.3 – Supporting Monitoring and Site Characterization Programs;
- CS.5 – Research Interpretation;
- WQ.2 – Water Quality Protection Planning; and
- OP.1 – Sanctuary Advisory Council Operations

Addressing the Issues – Regulations

Sanctuary regulations establish the boundary of the CINMS and the set of regulations applicable to that boundary. Sanctuary regulations are available at 15 CFR 922.70-922.74.

Any consideration of expanding the CINMS boundary will involve an analysis of the applicability and impact of Sanctuary regulations within any expanded Sanctuary area. The process of developing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) will require a comprehensive analysis of regulatory options and impacts with regard to a range of boundary alternatives. Subsequent to analysis and a public review of the SEIS, and issuance of a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS), a Final Rule will establish Sanctuary regulations within the CINMS boundary, if changed.